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ABSTRACT

Although there are many ways in which the roles of parents and teachers overlap during the very early years, there are important distinctions in their roles that often become a source of stress, especially to teachers. Seven distinctions in these roles are described: (1) scope of functions; (2) intensity of feelings; (3) intensity of attachment; (4) rationality; (5) spontaneity; (6) partiality; and (7) scope of responsibility. The paper explores each of these distinctions: parenting can be described as diffuse and limitless, while teaching is specific and limited; parents have a high intensity of affect for their children, while teachers have a relatively low intensity of affect; parenting should involve optimal attachment to the child, whereas teaching should involve optimal detachment; parents should be optimally irrational and teachers optimally rational; parenting should include an optimal level of spontaneity, while teaching should involve an optimal intentionality; parents are biased in favor of their children and are responsible for the individual within the group, whereas teachers should be unbiased and responsible to the whole group. The implications of these distinctions in the two roles are presented, and examples of how these distinctions might be addressed are outlined. (Contains 30 references.) (EV)

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Parenting and Teaching in Perspective

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Abstract

While there are many ways in which the roles of parents and teachers overlap during the very early years, there are important distinctions in their roles that often become a source of stress, especially to teachers. At least seven distinctions in the roles are discussed: (1) scope of functions, (2) intensity of feelings, (3) intensity of attachment, (4) rationality, (5) spontaneity, (6) partiality, and (7) scope of responsibility. The ways parents' and teachers' roles with respect to the children are distinctive on each of these dimensions are described. The implications of the distinctions in the two roles are presented and examples of how these distinctions might be addressed are outlined.

Parenting and Teaching in Perspective[1]

Introduction

My concern with the ideas presented here was stimulated by many conference presentations, articles, pamphlets, and brochures featuring slogans such as 'parents are their child's first teachers,' or 'parents are their child's best teachers.' At the same time, I was working with many teachers--especially in child care settings--who seemed on the verge of "burn out" caused, in part by their deep commitment to many of their charges whom they deemed to be in need of mothering. I propose today to make the case that it is more realistic and appropriate to see the roles of parents and teachers of young children as distinctive and complementary to each other .

The problems facing American families have received widespread attention in recent years. Newspapers and magazines have capitalized on and perhaps contributed to a mounting sense of alarm over the imminent disappearance of "the family." The 1980 White House Conference on the Family was reported to have been the occasion of bitter factional disputes over fundamental views on the family and the extent to which public agencies can be expected to support beleaguered families and unconventional living arrangements.

Much of the talk in conferences, panel discussions, and many reports in the

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[1] Paper presented at the Parent Child 2000 Conference. April 12 – 14, 2000. Business Design Centre, London, UK.

media betray a belief that in the "good old days" families were wonderful, warm, comfortable and benign -- always ready to provide the young with a harmonious and affectionate environment in which to grow. It is of some interest to note that the nostalgia in such discussions occurs at a time when the literature on the history of childhood and family life has been growing very rapidly[2]. The chances are that more has been written on the history of women, children, and families in the last few decades than in all the centuries before.

In general, the historical accounts of families and childhood now available suggest that the "good old days" were awful - especially for children (Langer, 1974; Stone, 1975, 1977; Wishy, 1972). In the not-so-distant past, at least in the Western world, adults were enjoined to save children from certain damnation, to break their wills, and to engage in other forms of what we would now call child abuse, mostly of a psychological type (see Wishy 1972). For the majority of children, the history of childhood suggests a record of almost uninterrupted hunger, disease, psychological and physical abuse, and other miseries. On the average, the quality of life for children is most likely much better today - by absolute standards - than it has ever been before. We sometimes forget that in the United States the Fair Labor Standards Act, which protected children from unfair labor practices, was not enacted until 1939. It has been widely acknowledged that, even then, the Act was passed because children were occupying jobs badly needed by unemployed adults

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[2]A review of history indicates persuasively that, although "child abuse" may be a modern term, the phenomenon is not a new one (Langer, 1974; Stone 1977). It may be that the standards by which we define child abuse are constantly revised upwards so that today's norm is tomorrow's abuse. Perhaps this tendency is in the nature of the development and history of civilization.

during the 1930s.

We often attribute our family and child rearing problems to a vague phenomenon we refer to as "change." Change has always been with us, and ideally it always will be. Perhaps the rate at which social and economic patterns change has accelerated so greatly that they occur within generations rather than simply between them. Perhaps another source of upheaval is that changes affecting families and educators are not sufficiently synchronized -- some parts of our lives change faster than other parts. One of the most vivid examples of poor synchronization of changes is that of increasing numbers of young mothers entering the labor force without corresponding increases in the provision of sufficient child care provisions and facilities of good quality.

The widespread feeling of frustration currently reported by parents and educators of young children cannot be alleviated by romanticizing the past, which, it turns out, was nothing to shout about for most of our ancestors. This chronic nostalgia can be thought of as 'selective amnesia!' Since we constantly change the standards by which we define the "good life," some sense of failure, of falling below our ideals, is always likely to stalk us.

As everyone here knows well - although most children still live in families rather than institutions, specific family arrangements have been changing over a several decades. Families are smaller, and many more of them are headed by single parents. It may be helpful to keep in mind that the particular family arrangement a child grows up with is not as important to the child's psychosocial development as are the meanings he or she gives to that arrangement. Thus, for example, if one grows up without a father, the significance of such paternal deprivation will vary

depending upon the meaning given to it. If the father is absent because he has gone off to war to save the country and to preserve freedom and democracy, the meaning of the absence will take a particular form. If nearly all the fathers of most peers have also gone off to war, father absence may be a shared, ennobling hardship. Indeed, in such a case, father presence might be insufferable to youngsters at certain ages.

If, on the other hand the deprivation is due to the father's desertion of the family, it may have a different meaning. If the father is in prison for a heinous crime, then again the absence will very likely have another meaning to the child. If all one's peers' fathers are present, the meaning of the absence of one's own may cause painful feelings. If the separation or divorce of parents alleviates pre-separation disharmony and stress, father absence may take on a different meaning from that in other cases. The point is that deprivation itself cannot determine the outcome of a child's development, but the meaning the young child gives to that deprivation and the feelings those meanings engender may have significant effects on the child's development. One of the major responsibilities of caregivers is to help children to give appropriate meaning to their experiences and cope with their feelings.

We seem to be at a point in social history when parents have great responsibility (although perhaps not enough authority) for helping their children to develop personalities capable of early self-sufficiency and autonomy (LeVine, 1980). The young must acquire complex motivational patterns that will enable them to make long term occupational and career commitments early, and to choose from among a variety of possible lifestyles. Many of the stresses of parenting stem from the

wide range of choices, alternatives, and options available to modern societies in virtually every aspect of life. It is not difficult to imagine how many fewer arguments, heated discussions, and reductions in demanding behavior on the part of children would follow from having to live with minimal or even no choices in such things as food, television shows, toys, clothes, and so forth!

To some extent, parental stress is exacerbated by the shrinking size of the family. In times when families included seven or eight children, anxiety about the growth and accomplishments could be spread over the group. If one or two did well, three or four got by, the rest were not much to brag about, the parents might still have been able to walk in the neighborhood with their heads held up. A family with only one or two children may be putting too many eggs in the proverbial basket for them to carry with easy confidence. Fifty years ago, the offspring at the bottom of the pile could be accounted for by their resemblance to an uncle or great aunt from a particular branch or "the other side" of the family! However, the progress of social and behavioral sciences has heightened awareness of the centrality of parental influences on the outcome of development, even though recent corrections of that view have recently emerged (Harris, 1998) . Few today would excuse a poor developmental outcome as a case of a "bad seed" occasionally showing up in descendants.

Furthermore, anxiety about one's effectiveness as a parent may be related to the fact that because the family is potentially the source of the greatest good, it is also, in equal proportion, potentially the source of the greatest damage and pain. Ideally, the family is the major provider of support, warmth, comfort, protection, identity, and other essentials. But when the family falls short in these provisions,

suffering can be acute, and significant disturbances in development may result. It is unlikely that parents were more devoted to their children in bygone days than they are today. The tasks of parenting have become more complex, and the impact of parental failure seems to be more serious. It is important to note that in every social class there are children whose psychological lives are destroyed by their families. I should add that the psychological lives of some of those children may be saved by one or two teachers who give them support, recognition, and encouragement they might miss from other sources.

In fact, there is increasing pressure (often self-imposed) on teachers in child care centers, preschools, and primary classes to respond to the apparent needs of children assumed to be unmet by their busy, working, and, in many cases lone parents. At the same time, there is growing enthusiasm among policymakers and social service agencies for parent training and education and parent involvement in schooling. Among the outcomes of research on young children is the welcome acknowledgment that parents' behavior plays a central role in their youngsters' intellectual development.

New optimism about the potential educational role of parents has given rise to numerous programs designed to help parents become more effective "teachers" of their young children. The objectives of many of these programs go beyond strengthening the specific parenting skills to include training in tutorial and instructional skills as well. While teachers have been under increasing pressure to be responsive, open, inclusive and sensitive to parents, I am not aware of any serious efforts to help parents appreciate the nature of teachers' work and the stresses involved in the long day care of very young children, many of whom bring

heavy emotional luggage with them to this care.

In summary, pressures seem to mount on mothers to instruct their children in ways that will render them more responsive to schooling, perhaps in part due to a lack of confidence in teachers and schools and a sense of urgency in giving children an early start on the academic treadmill. On the other hand, it is not unusual to hear teachers of young children complain that they must supply the nurturance and affection children seem to need before instruction can be effective. While mothers often believe that their children might attain greater academic success if teachers were more competent, teachers often believe that their own efforts would be more successful if mothers only attended properly to their children's psychosocial needs. So long as such recriminatory attitudes persist, parent teacher relationships can be characterized as missed opportunities for essential mutual support.

DIMENSIONS OF DISTINCTION BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS

It is obvious that teachers do many of the same things for young children that mothers do, and vice versa. It is in the nature of young children that from time to time they require of their teachers in child care, preschool and early primary settings some of the same tending, caring, and guidance given them by their mothers at home. Similarly, mothers frequently help their children to acquire knowledge and skills as do teachers. Although the behavior of the two role-takers is likely to overlap on each of the seven dimensions discussed below, the central tendencies of each can be expected to yield the distinctions indicated in the table provided. In the service of exploration of the issues, distinctions between the two roles are somewhat exaggerated; no role-takers occur as the pure types described here.

Furthermore, it should be understood that, although the dimensions on which the two roles are distinguished interact with each other, these dimensions are enumerated separately in order to highlight potential problems arising from confusion between them.

Scope of functions

In a discussion of some of the discontinuities between families and schools, Getzels (1974) points out that the two institutions are discontinuous in at least two ways: specifically, in the scope and the affectivity characterizing relationships in the two settings.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1. DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MOTHERING AND TEACHING IN THEIR CENTRAL TENDENCIES ON SEVEN DIMENSIONS

Role Dimension	Parenting	Teaching
1. Scope of Functions	Diffuse & Limitless	Specific & Limited
2. Intensity of Affect	High	Low
3. Attachment of Adult to Child	Optimal Attachment	Optimal Detachment
4. Rationality	Optimal Irrationality	Optimal Rationality
5. Spontaneity	Optimal Spontaneity	Optimal Intentionality
6. Partiality	Partial - Biased	Inpartial - unbiased
7. Scope of Responsibility	Individual in group	Whole group

Under the rubric of scope, Getzels points out that the functions to be fulfilled by the family are diffuse and limitless, in contradistinction to those of the school, which are specific and limited. The all-encompassing scope of the responsibilities, duties, and potential content of the relationships within families is "taken for granted." There is, according to Getzels, nothing about the young child

that is not the parents' business. Thus, it is unnecessary to prove that any aspect of the child's life is within the purview of the family.

However, in the case of the school, relationships between teachers and children are specific in scope, function, and content in that the legitimate area of interaction "is limited to a particular technically-defined sphere, and what is not conceded to the school because of its special competence remains the private affair of the participants" (Getzels, 1974, p.48)

Similarly, Newson and Newson (1976) point out that the responsibility society "enjoins on parents to their young children is quite different from that which it expects from teachers, nurses and other professionals...for one thing it has no fixed hours...parents of preschool children never go off duty" (p.400). Hess (1980) also points out that the "relationship between child and parent is different in several ways from the relationship between child and caregiver. The mother-child relationship calls for and justifies more direct, intimate interaction, including anger and discipline as well as love and support" (p. 149).

The distinctions in scope of functions proposed by Getzels (1974), by Newson and Newson (1976), and by Hess (1980) appear to become greater and sharper with increasing age of the pupil. To teachers in preschools and primary schools, the distinctions are problematic precisely because of the age of the child: the younger the child, the wider the range of functioning for which adults must assume responsibility. Thus, age--and the level of maturity associated with it--in and of itself gives rise to confusion between the two roles. To expect child care or preschool and even primary school teachers to accept as wide a scope of functions

as do parents do serves to exacerbate the problems of unclear role boundaries.

Intensity of affect

It seem reasonable to assume that both the intensity of affect (of all kinds) and the frequency with which behavior is marked by intense affect would also distinguish the two sets of role-takers. That is to say that, on the average, when the central tendencies of parents are compared with those of teachers, we should find more frequent and greater affective intensity in the behavior of parents toward their children than the behavior of teachers in interaction with their pupils. As Rubenstein and Howes (1979) have pointed out, the role of day care teachers is "both more specified and limited than the role of mother at home...the mother's emotional investment may enhance the likelihood of high-intensity affective responses" (p.3).

Newson and Newson (1976) address this dimension by calling it "involvement" and suggest that quality makes parents different from other more "professional" caretakers. Specifically, they point out that

> a good parent-child relationship is in fact very unlike a good teacher-child relationship; yet because the roles have certain ingredients in common, though in different proportions (nurturance, discipline, information-giving, for example), they are sometimes confused by the participants themselves, to the misunderstanding of all concerned. (pp. 401-402).

Pressure on parents to take on more instructional-type functions can lead to a variety of difficulties, one of which is exemplified in the case of a mother of a child with clear diagnosed learning disabilities. The mother reported that she and her child were enrolled in a special "home intervention" program designed to teach mothers to give their learning-disabled children regular rigorous instruction and skill training at home. Although unintended by the program's leaders, one effect was

that the mother became so anxious about helping her son to meet the specified daily learning objectives set for them both that their relationship deteriorated. With each lesson in which he fell behind, she became disappointed and tense, and the child became nervous and recalcitrant, which, in turn, increased her own disappointment and tension, and so forth until, as she reported, she realized "the boy had no mother." She withdrew from the lessons and asked the professionals to continue to teach him while she supported his struggle to learn by being the relatively soft, understanding, encouraging, and non-demanding adult in his life. In some ways, this story reminds us of common problems encountered when trying to teach a close friend or relative to drive a car. We become aware of how much easier it is to be patient and understanding of a stranger than of someone close to us. Very often, the stress encountered in trying to teach someone very close to us places a heavy burden on the relationship.

In sum, one would expect the average level of affective intensity of the two role-takers to be distinguished from each other as indicated in the table. The affectivity dimension is closely related to the attachment dimension discussed in the following section.

Attachment

Although the term "attachment" is widely used in professional as well as popular literature on child development and child rearing, it is a difficult one to define. In the literature on infant development, attachment refers to an underlying variable inferred from infants' reactions to strangers and to separations and reunions with primary caretakers (Cohen, 1974). Rutter (1979) indicates that attachment is a construct involving several features, noting that the concept should be distinguished from "bonding" to adults. The available definitions focus almost exclusively on the attachment of the child to adults. What is required for this

discussion is a way of defining the attachment of the adults to their children. Ramey and Farran (1978) offer a broad definition of adult-child attachment, using the term "functional maternal attachment" to mean "simply those caregiving functions that must be performed for infants to sustain a normal development" (p.2). The set of functions includes "at a minimum a refrain from physical and verbal abuse, the provision of information and affection, and direct personal involvement with the infant" (p.2).

Research on the reciprocity and rhythmicity that characterizes normal or ideal (Melmed, 2000) parent-infant relationships brings us closer to a way of defining attachment so that the adult's attachment to the child is included. For the purposes of this discussion, attachment is defined as the capacity to be aroused to a wide range of behaviors and intense feelings by the status and behavior of the child. If the attachment is mutual, then one would expect the behavior and feelings of either member of the pair to activate strong feelings and/or reactions in the other. This definition is intended to include such feelings on the part of the adult as anxiety, alarm, fear, anger, and rage, as well as the proverbial "pride and joy" and other tender, loving, and caring emotions. Common usage of the term tends to refer primarily to the nurturant side of the spectrum of feelings and behaviors of adults and to overlook the point that intense rage or terror in the face of impending danger to the child are also manifestations of attachment. The definition proposed here implies that the opposite of attachment is not rejection or anger, but indifference.

The entry in the table, optimal attachment, is intended to reflect the notion that, whereas development could be jeopardized by parent-child attachment that is too weak, it could also be undermined by excessive attachment, commonly called "smother love."[3]

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[3] What constitutes an optimal level of attachment for any given parent-child pair would be difficult to predict or pre-specify since we only know whether the attachment is optimal if the child is observed to be thriving; however, failure to thrive may not always be attributable to disturbances in attachment.

The optimal attachment recommended here as an ideal feature of parent-child relationships is distinguished from the optimal detachment that should mark teacher-child relationships. The latter is sometimes referred to as "detached concern" (Maslach & Pines, 1977). The term "detachment" is used not only to characterize the distinctions in the functions of the two role-takers, but to suggest also that it is appropriate for professionals to make self-conscious or deliberate efforts to distance themselves *optimally* from their clients. As Maslach and Pines (1977) have suggested, people who work intensively and intimately with people for extended periods of time inevitably suffer stresses associated with strong emotional arousal. As they point out, one of the ways of coping with such potential stress is to adopt techniques of detachment, which vary in their effectiveness as well as in their relationship to the conduct of work: "By treating one's clients or patients in a more objective, detached way, it becomes easier to perform the necessary interviews, tests, or operations without suffering from strong psychological discomfort" (p.100). The authors go on to suggest that "detached concern" is a term that conveys "the difficult (and almost paradoxical) position of having to distance oneself from people in order to cure them" (p.100).

Teachers who are unable to detach themselves optimally from their pupils and thus become too close to them are likely to suffer emotional "burn-out," a syndrome typically accompanied by loss of capacity to feel anything at all for the client. Certainly, those who are too detached - at the other extreme - for whatever reason, are unlikely to be effective in their work with children because such extreme detachment is also accompanied by low responsiveness to client needs and demands.

One of the advantages parents have over teachers in dealing with the stresses of attachment, in addition to intense affect, is their tacit knowledge that their child's psychological and physical dependency upon them will slowly but surely be outgrown. Teachers of day care, preschool, and kindergarten children, on the other hand, must cope with dependent children year in and year out for an entire

career. They must protect themselves from potential burn-out by developing an optimal level of detached concern -- optimal in terms of their own emotional stability and effective functioning.

It should be noted also that teachers who are suspected of cultivating close attachments to their pupils in order to "meet their own personal needs," as the saying goes, are subject to substantial derision from colleagues and other professionals. Occasionally, such teachers come to perceive themselves as protecting children from their own parents, and occasionally the child's responsiveness to such teacher closeness gives rise to parental jealousy. As Anna Freud (1952) pointed out long ago, a teacher is neither mother nor therapist. A teacher with objective attitudes "can respond warmly enough to satisfy children without getting herself involved to a dangerous extent" (p.232). She adds that a teacher must not think of herself as a "mother-substitute." If, as teachers, "we play the part of a mother, we get from the child the reactions which are appropriate for the mother-child relationship" (p.231). All of this could result in rivalry with mothers and other undesirable consequences, making teacher-mother mutual support and complementarity difficult to develop.

Optimal detachment is also desirable for teachers because it can free them to make realistic evaluations of their pupils' development and learning -- a major component of their work. Parents, on the other hand, may not have to make realistic or so-called objective evaluations of their children's growth very often, although their lack of realism is a frequent source of frustration to teachers! In the long run, a parent's optimism about her child's progress, even if it seems excessive, is probably in the child's best interest. Such optimism in and of itself may contribute to the child's growth and development. Maternal pessimism, on the other hand, may be more damaging than any teacher's realism. Many children seem to think that mother and possibly father, being omniscient and knowing the child more fully and

completely than the teacher, are in possession of the "real truth" and that when there is a discrepancy between the parent's and the teacher's evaluation, the former are more accurate. Experience suggests that individuals caught between their mother's pessimism concerning their potential for achievement and a teacher's optimism devote considerable energy to the problem of how to keep the "real truth' from the teacher, having no choice but to accept their parent's view as the true one. Such a discrepancy may account for some cases of lifelong doubts about one's true abilities in spite of a solid record of accomplishment.

Differences in the assessment of the child by the two role-takers may be related to the differences in the baselines to which the child in question is being compared. A mother may be comparing her four-year-old to about a dozen that she has observed casually; a teacher may be comparing the same child to one hundred and fifty she has observed closely. They may also be due to dramatic differences in the child's behavior in the home and at school. It is not uncommon to hear both mothers and teachers comment on how strikingly different the child seems in the setting other than the one in which the child is commonly observed. Frequently, a mother will report that the teacher's description of her child is difficult to reconcile with her own experiences with the child. Studies of this phenomenon and the ways children cope with discrepant evaluations have not been found.

Another consideration leading to the recommendation of optimal detachment for teachers is the importance of minimizing the likelihood of incidents we might call "invasions of privacy" or other forms of encroachment upon aspects of children's socialization that are the legitimate domain of the family. Similarly, optimal detachment is recommended in order to help teachers avoid the ever present temptation to engage in favoritism. Since it is unlikely that one can be strongly attached to more than one or two pupils, the risk of favoritism increases with increasing closeness to any one pupil. The optimal detachment approach should help to reduce those dangers.

Many early childhood workers reject the value of optimal detachment because of their deep concern for children's assumed need to feel closeness and attachment to adults. It is not clear how the proposed detachment would affect such "needy"

children. But it is useful to keep in mind that, whereas the relationships between adults and children in child care, preschool, and primary classes are reciprocal, they are not necessarily symmetrical. In particular, it may be possible for young children to feel very attached to their teachers, even to worship and adore them, without the teachers' responding at the same level of intensity. Such "unrequited love" during the early years may help the child to gratify needs for cathexis without placing severe emotional burdens on teachers. Research on such asymmetrical attachment might help to clarify the potential effects on such children of the detachment of their teachers.

Rationality

It is hypothesized here that effective mothering is associated, at least in part, with optimal irrationality, and that either extreme rationality or extreme irrationality may be equally damaging to the growing child. On the one hand, extreme rationality in a parent might be perceived by the child as cool, calculating unresponsiveness. Such a perception could lead to a variety of emotional disturbances. Extreme irrationality on the other hand, may present the growing child with a range of problems stemming from insufficient predictability of the interpersonal environment.

By using the term "optimal irrationality" I do not intend to propose chaotic, scatterbrained mindlessness! Rather, the emphasis is upon adequate depth and strength of what we sometimes call "ego-involvement" - similar in nature to attachment as defined above.

The optimal irrationality suggested here is, in a sense, a matter of the mind, or the rational aspects of functioning, employed "in the service of the heart," so to speak. On the other hand, much literature is prepared for and presented to teachers to remind them to bring their hearts to bear upon the rational aspects of their work and their professional minds.

The element of ego-involvement may also be illustrated by the notion that, if a mother perceives herself as a failure at mothering, she is likely to

experience strong feelings of inadequacy, painful guilt, and deep regret, perhaps for a lifetime. If, on the other hand, a teacher perceives himself or herself to have failed at teaching, he or she can leave the occupation in a fairly orderly fashion (for example, at the end of an academic year), and residual emotions like guilt, feelings of failure, regret, and defeat are likely to subside and disappear within a few months.

A different aspect of this dimension is captured in the expression "No one in her right mind would be a mother!" As Bronfenbrenner (1978, pp. 773-774) has put it, "in order to develop, a child needs the enduring, irrational involvement of one or more adults," by which he means, "Somebody has to be crazy about that kid!" For modern, well-educated parents, at least in Western industrialized societies however, this may appear to be something of an overstatement.

A rational analysis of the pros and cons of motherhood would be unlikely to lead to a decision to undertake it. Indeed, it is difficult to find "reasons" for having children today! Offspring are not useful" as a hedge against economic dependency in old age. Rather than being considered potential members of the family labor force and contributors to the family income, they can be expected to become substantial drains on the family finances for a long period of time. Indeed, it is suggested by Stone (1975) that, as the economic value of children has decreased, the importance of affectional bonds has increased. Thus, even more than their forebears, modern parents have children just because they "have to" -- irrationally, so to speak.

Teachers, on the other hand, should be optimally rational in that they should bring to bear upon their work careful reasoning concerning what is to be done or not done. Teaching calls for rational analysis of how to proceed in the education of young children on the basis of accumulated knowledge of how children develop and learn, and with an understanding of what is appropriate pedagogy for children of a given age range and experiential background. Presumably, the value of teacher training is precisely that it equips the future teacher with information and knowledge from the relevant "supply" disciplines and from pedagogy for children of a given age range and experiential background. Presumably, the value of teacher

training is precisely that it equips the future teacher with information and knowledge from the relevant "supply" disciplines and from pedagogy, all of which become resources for proceeding rationally in the work of teaching. It seems reasonable to assume that teachers' possession of relevant knowledge would serve to increase their confidence in their own behavior and in their general role competence. However, increased knowledge for mothers may have the opposite effect -- and may serve to undermine what is often rather fragile confidence when facing "experts" who may appear comparatively cool and confident in their own advice and procedures.

Spontaneity

Along very similar lines, parents should strive to be optimally spontaneous in dealing with their children. Many programs of parent education run the risk of encouraging parents to become excessively cerebral and self-conscious in responding to their children. Extreme pressure to modify their behavior may lead parents to a condition called "analysis paralysis." This inability to act with adequate confidence could be damaging to the parent-child relationship. The resolve to respond to one's child according to certain steps and procedures arrived at cerebrally (intellectually, as it were) may work well on the first or even second occasion. But very often, even the strongest resolutions break down under the weight of what is (and should be) an emotionally loaded relationship. Such "breakdowns" are related to the fact that the child's behavior/status really matters to the parent, a situation that comes with attachment as defined above. The cool, calculating, ever-reasoning or reasonable parent might be perceived by the child as indifferent and uncaring.

Another aspect of spontaneity is that it is precisely spontaneity that gives a parent's day-to-day behavior the variation and contrast growing children can use as a basis for hypothesis formulation and testing in their quest to make sense of experiences. Indeed, it may well be that what gives play its reputed high value in children's learning derives from the spontaneous, casual, and often random variations produced in many types of play (Newson & Newson, 1979). These variations provide information that the child operates on and transforms into meaningful constructs--for example, concepts, schemata, and so on. The opportunity

to observe such spontaneous variation, and to obtain parental help in making logical inferences from them, may be the very thing to which slogans such as "Mother is the best teacher" refer.

By contrast, instruction can be defined as non-random, pre-specified sets of stimuli or information deliberately intended to cause specific constructs and skills to be acquired. This contrast between spontaneous play and instruction may also help to account for some of the dissension concerning appropriate programming for infant day care. On the one hand, there is pressure to rise above the custodial functions of day care and to provide "developmental" programs. On the other hand, formal lessons, instruction, or structured activities are thought to be inappropriate for the young. If the staff must await spontaneous "teachable moments," they may feel as though they are not earning their keep, not really "working," and role ambiguity may intensify.

Whereas mothers should be optimally spontaneous with their children, teachers should strive to be optimally intentional about their work. Teachers' activities should be largely predetermined and premeditated in terms of aims, goals, and broad objectives that are more-or-less explicit and that are responsive to parents (the primary clients) as well as to pupils. With training and experience, teachers' intentional behavior takes on a spontaneous quality as well.

Spontaneity in the parent is important also in that it may contribute to the widest possible range of information being made available to the child. The availability of a wide range of information increases the probability that children will be able to locate information that matches adequately or optimally what they are ready to operate upon and/or assimilate. Furthermore, if the child's location of appropriate information is followed by parental focusing on the selected events or information, then the child's environment becomes a highly informative and responsive one. In studies of mother-infant interaction, researchers have suggested that adults exaggerate their facial and vocal expressions in order to provide "behavioral contrasts" in response to infants' "limited information processing capacities" (Tronick, Als, & Brazelton, 1980, p.20). Thus, spontaneous

variations in behavior ideally serve to increase the likelihood that matches between the child's readiness to process information and the adult's provision of information will be maximized. This assertion is supported indirectly by the findings of Hatano, Miyake, and Tiajina (1980). In a study of children's acquisition of number, the investigators, after having observed mother-child interaction two years earlier, showed that "the mother's directiveness was correlated negatively with the child's number conservation score" (p.383).

As suggested above, instruction and pedagogy are concerned with narrowing the variations presented to the child so that specific information and child operations upon it can be maximized. However, if the narrow range of information presented by the pedagogue misses the mark for a particular child, the child's alternatives are fewer than they might be at home, and the result may be a sense of failure or inadequacy, which in turn may have deleterious effects upon the child's receptivity to instruction. Questions concerning what sets of variations, stimuli, or information should be made available to young children in preschool classes have occupied curriculum developers for many years, and definitive answers have not yet been agreed upon.

Perhaps it is the very degree of intentionality that most clearly distinguishes mothering from teaching and child rearing from education. This is not to say that parents have no intentions! It is likely, however, that parents' intentions are less specific and explicit to parents themselves, as well as to others, than are teachers' - and are less formal, more global, and more personalized in that they are held for their own individual offspring rather than for a group. Research on the degree and specificity of intentions among the two sets of role-takers might help to sharpen understanding of these role distinctions.

Early childhood educators often speak appreciatively of the great amount children learn from the hidden curriculum, from incidental learning, or from unintended or unplanned events. However, by definition, such unintended learning cannot be intended...one cannot intend something to happen unintentionally! Presumably, the purpose of training in pedagogy is to bring the consequences of one's pedagogical methods into closer and closer agreement with the intentions

underlying that underlay it. Similarly, the virtue of instruction would seem to lie in the deliberate minimization of spontaneous or random variations in activities and responses, maximizing the likelihood that specific stimuli will be presented to the learner and that intended or predicted learning outcomes will most likely be assured.

Partiality

Along lines very similar to those already discussed above, it may be noted that parent-child relationships are not only charged with intense emotions (compared with teacher-child relationships) but that "children in the family are treated as special categories" (Lightfoot, 1978, p.22). Generally, parents do not merely want their children to be normal; they want them to be excellent! As Green (1983) points out, the aim of parents is "to secure the best they can get...they seek not simply the best that is possible on the whole, but the best that is possible for their own children" (p. 320). It is thus in the nature of things that parents are partial towards their own children; biased in their favor; champions of their children's needs; and exaggerators of their virtues, gifts, and assets. This *particularism* stands in sharp contrast to the *universalism* expected of teachers. Thus, it appropriate for parents to ask teachers to make special allowances and provisions for their own children, and that is precisely what a teacher usually cannot do since the teacher must treat the children impartially. Teacher impartiality means that, as needed, the teacher makes equally available to every child, (whether the child is liked or not) whatever skills, knowledge, insights, or techniques the teacher has at his or her disposal. Indeed, it is the very capacity to make all of one's pedagogical know-how available to a child one does not especially like that marks the teacher as a genuine professional.

Scope of responsibility

The great emphasis placed by early childhood educators on the importance of meeting the "individual needs" of their pupils may have obscured yet another distinction between the roles of parenting and teaching -- namely, the parents are typically concerned about the welfare of one rather than all of the teachers' pupils. Parents have a right to protect their own child's cultural/ethnic uniqueness and to ask of

the teacher that special consideration, as appropriate, be made for their individual child. The teacher is responsible not only for every individual in the group, but for the life of the group as a unit. However, the teacher has to balance the importance of responding to unique individual needs against the responsibility for establishing and maintaining the ethos of the group through which the norms of behavior, expected levels of achievement, and even many feelings are learned.

Summary of dimensions

The seven dimensions outlined above reflect a common underlying variable that is difficult to name. As Lightfoot (1978) has put it:

> The universalistic relationships encouraged by teachers are supportive of a more rational, predictable, and stable social system with visible and explicit criteria for achievement and failure. [The teacher-child relationship] does not suffer the chaotic fluctuation of emotions, indulgence, and impulsiveness that are found in the intimate association of parents and children...Even the teachers who speak of "loving" their children do not really mean the boundless, all-encompassing love of mothers and fathers but rather a very measured and time-limited love that allows for withdrawal. (p.23)

Newson and Newson (1976), in a study of 700 elementary school children and their relationships to their families and schools, also underscore this point:

> Parents have an involvement with their own children which nobody else can simulate...The crucial characteristic of the parental role is its partiality for the individual child...The best that community care can offer is impartiality -- to be fair to every child in its care. But a developing personality needs more than that: it needs to know that to someone it matters more than other children; that someone will go to unreasonable lengths, not just reasonable ones, for its sake. (p. 405)

Our understanding of the potential problems arising from confusing the two roles might be helped by studies of those women who occupy both roles simultaneously. Informal observation and experience suggest that teachers who are also mothers of

young children may have elevated expectations of their own children as well as of themselves. It has been reported that such mothers are sometimes ashamed and embarrassed by their emotionality with their own children, expecting themselves to be as level-headed at home as they are in the classroom. Similarly, some expect their own children to exemplify perfection to enhance their credibility as teachers. But such emotionality at home and detachment on the job at school are appropriate distinctions in role enactment.

To the extent that such role fusion does occur and produces these kinds of expectations, clarification of the distinction between the mothering and teaching roles may help to alleviate some of the strains for those who occupy both roles at the same time. In addition, some research on the ways such dual role-takers define the two roles and what sources of role fusion, confusion, and strain they identify would be helpful.

Implications for Parent Education

One of the major functions of parent education programs should be to help parents think through their own goals for their own children, to develop and clarify what kind of lifestyle they want to construct for their family, and to identify what they themselves perceive to be the major issues deserving attention. The program should offer parents insights and various kinds of information while encouraging them to accept only what makes sense to them and what is consistent with their own preferences.

Parent education programs should also encourage and support parents' confidence in their own impulses and in their own competence. It is hypothesized that, in the long run, efforts to support impulses already in place and available to the mother will, for example, result in greater change and improvement in parental functioning than efforts to change or replace those impulses directly. This hypothesis rests on the assumption that parental confidence, in and of itself, leads to greater effectiveness (particularly in matters relating to the assertion of authority in parent-child interaction) and that greater effectiveness, in and of itself, leads to greater confidence. This "looping" or "circularity," in which the

effects of behavior become in turn the causes of effects, would seem to be especially powerful in relationships marked by high intensity of affect --that is, in relationships in which effects really matter to the actors. The hypothesis is also related to the assumption that greater parental confidence is more likely to lead to openness to new information than is parental embarrassment, shame, or low self-confidence.

As indicated earlier in this discussion, parent education that is excessively technique-based or technique-oriented may yield positive effects in the short run but greater feelings of inadequacy and/or guilt in the long run. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that parenting is not primarily technical but is more dispositional (Katz, 1995) and ideally largely unselfconscious. Furthermore, consistency in the application of techniques tends to subside after a few weeks, and this inconsistency may be followed by heightened feelings of incompetence or guilt. A related point here is that children respond not so much to the specific behavior of their parents as to the meanings they themselves assign to that behavior. But the meanings children attribute to any given episode are a function of the larger pattern, of which they perceive a specific episode to be a part. Children may have difficulty giving the meanings their mothers hope for to technique-bound episodes. Thus, for example, parental reliance on specific techniques, phrases, or other maneuvers may confound the problems issuing from faulty patterns of behavior or from characteristic parental dispositions. The latter take time to change and reshape, and may perhaps be more effectively modified in parents who have more, rather than less, confidence (see Hess, 1980).

Parent educators often report that the spontaneous impulses of some of the parents they work with put children in jeopardy, usually in relation to their psychosocial rather than intellectual development. To what extent such judgments are matters of taste, preference, and/or value differences between parent educators and their clients is not yet clear. In fact, it may be in the nature of things that parent educators have to work in the absence of sufficient certainty concerning the potential benefit or damage of a given maternal pattern. One way to cope with such uncertainty is to scrutinize as carefully as possible each case of

potential jeopardy with regard to the certainty of risk or danger to the child. When, in the educator's best judgment at a given time, the potential for danger seems reasonably clear, then referral to specialized agencies should be made. It would be unethical not to do so. However, when examination of the available information raises doubts about the potential danger to the child, then the next appropriate step seems to be to encourage and support the mother's own pattern of responding to the child. Differences in taste, philosophical positions, and/or values probably underlie many of the judgments that educators make concerning the mother's need to change her behavior. However, it may be useful to remember that parent educators as well as teachers of young children are bound to take firm stands on their beliefs and philosophical positions. The latter gives teachers the kind of certainty required for action in complex situations, in which reliable data cannot serve as a basis for decision-making .

Powell (1980) suggests that, when parents are given new information or are pressed into changing their patterns of behavior in ways that are discrepant with their own values, they minimize the discrepant stimuli to reduce their influence. Powell's analyses of the various parental strategies for coping with the pressures placed upon them to change serve to remind us that education in parenting is not an easy matter (see Durio & Hughes, 1982). It may be that trying to get mothers to instruct their children in pre-academic tasks is easier than helping them with deeper and more complex aspects of development (for example, self-reliance, moral development, social skills, motivation, and so on).

Implications for Teachers of Young Children

The discussion presented above suggests a number of points that may help teachers in their encounters with mothers, as well as in coping with the day-to-day problems of working with young children.

It seems obvious, even without detailed analyses of the two roles, that the special contributions of each role-taker to the ultimate socialization of the young child should be mutually understood, accepted, and respected. Parent educators, as well as those who write in the popular press for parents, might help by

acknowledging the complementarity of these functions rather than by trying to fix blame on one or the other for whatever social disaster is capturing popular attention at a given moment. Expressions like "Parents are the child's best teacher" seem to suggest that teachers are, if not the worst, then certainly a distant second best. The comparison itself is inappropriate. What should be emphasized are the functions and characteristics of each role and how the efforts of each role-taker might be supported by the other.

Another implication of the analyses attempted in this discussion is that teachers should take time periodically to consider whether they have achieved an optimum level of involvement or detachment in their relationships with children. The risk of teacher burn-out is a real one, especially when the work is with children whose families are under stress. Teachers who work together as members of a teaching team might also help each other by developing a system for giving each other relief during those moments when the emotional load feels too heavy.

In addition, teachers may be helped by focusing on those aspects of the child's functioning they actually do control. A teacher cannot change the family into which a child is born or with whom he or she is living. Nor can the teacher generally change very much of the parents' behavior. But a teacher can take responsibility for the time a child is actually directly in his or her care and can focus on making that time as supportive, enriching, and educative as possible. The latter is a sufficiently big task by itself without adding to it the need to make up for a child's alleged missing parenting!

Teachers may also find it helpful in their relations with parents to acknowledge and accept their advocacy for and partiality toward their own children as normal components of parenthood. Similarly, as parents approach teachers to request special dispensations for their own children, teachers' acknowledgment of the "naturalness" of such demands may help them to respond more patiently, less defensively, and more professionally than they often seem to do. Teachers might be mindful on such occasions that, although they may practice impartiality within their own classrooms, they champion their own classes when representing them as a group

in comparison with other teachers' classes! On such occasions, teachers also ask for special dispensations and also describe their own classes as having special or unique needs, gifts, and strengths -- much the way parents do for their individual children. Recognition of this phenomenon may help teachers respond to parents with greater respect and understanding and to see the adversarial aspects of their relationship as inherent in their roles rather than as personality conflicts.

Conclusion

Much of the present discussion is speculative, based on informal observations and reports of the experiences of teachers, parents, and parent educators. Research that would ascertain the validity of these speculations would be helpful. Of all of the potential research efforts on matters raised in this discussion, those that would advance our understanding of the stresses and coping skills of teachers and child care workers have the highest priority. Present social and economic developments suggest that more and more children and their parents will come to depend upon professional child care workers and preschool teachers and that more parents will stand to benefit from well-designed parent education programs. Much is yet to be learned about how such professional activities should be conducted and about what kind of working conditions are desirable. Certainly, mutual support of the persons involved should help each to cope more effectively with the stresses encountered when living and working with young children every day.

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